

## Virtual Schooling for Students At- Risk: Interventions for Success

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### Topics

- ✚ Who are at-risk students?
- ✚ What helps at-risk students succeed?
- ✚ How are online and blended programs succeeding with at-risk students?
- ✚ How can leaders learn more?

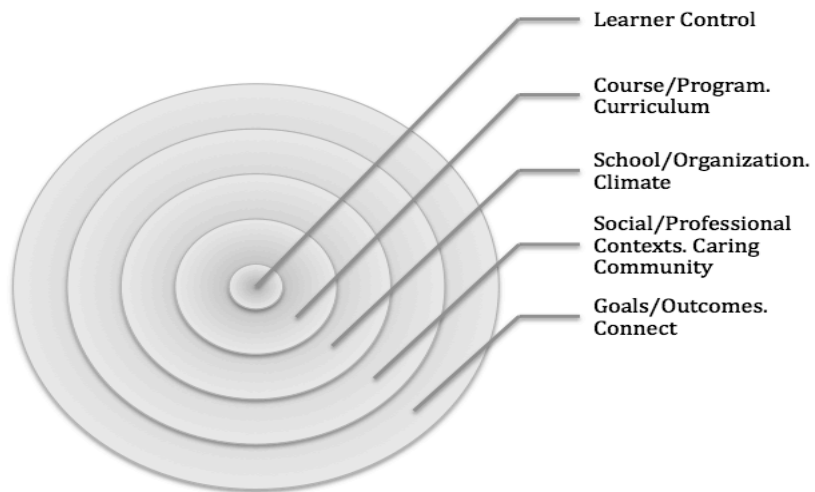
### Academic risk factors

- + Lack of progress/struggling to keep up
- + High absenteeism
- + Not meeting grade level requirements/risk of dropping out

### Personal/Family risk factors

- + Special needs
- + Racial/ethnic minority groups (maybe low SES)
- + Behavior issues
- + English as a second language
- + Frequent moves/transiency
- + Teen pregnancy
- + Absentee parents

### *The 5 Cs of Student Engagement Model*



### ***Control***

- ✚ Center of the model because it represents the student's ability to take control of his or her own learning and behaviors.
- ✚ Students are taught both self-determination skills and meta-cognitive learning/behavior strategies.

## Control Related Objectives

- + Students learning online require understanding of the structure of online courses, the roles of online teachers, and their role as online students.
- + In online courses, syllabi and other documents that outline the course structures and roles are a basic success factor

## *Curriculum*

- + Design of curriculum that embeds research-based practices to teach content and differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs.
- + Curriculum should be relevant to students by connecting content to skills perceived as necessary by students.
- + Developing differentiated scaffolds for each student, monitored by a teacher-mentor, and supported by an orientation in time management and task prioritizing.

## Curriculum Related Objectives

- + Students at risk require monitoring and research based intervention across subject areas.
- + The knowledge base underlying effective virtual schooling points to interaction between students and teachers.
- + While much differentiation in an online high school course is possible using automated feedback and adaptive technology, the role of teachers, tutors, mentors, and facilitators in understanding the nuances of each student's learning path cannot be understated.

## *Connect*

- + Connection is central to the purpose of education, to teach students the skills they need once they graduate.
- + Learning needs to be connected to post-school needs as well as current concerns students may have.

## Connect Related Objectives

- + Students learning online require understanding of why learning is important.
- + Student motivation is a necessary prerequisite for the independent task of learning online, and a belief in the relevance of the learning is a primary component of motivation to learn.
- + Course designers and teachers can increase a student's sense of relevance by continually making connections among the student's current interests, his/her goals, and the curriculum.

## *Climate*

- + Supporting both the student and the curriculum is a school climate that accepts a diverse student population and fosters a safe place to learn.
- + Rules and regulations should be fair and enforced equitably.
- + Climate reform needs to be a whole-school reform to ensure everyone's needs are met.

## ***Caring Community***

- + This encompasses all components of the model by ensuring learners feel part of a community that cares about them.
- + As a caring community learning takes place in an environment that knows the needs and goals of each student and fosters a sense of belonging.
- + A personalized learning environment that offers each student a mentor is an evidence-based best practice .

## **Climate and Caring Community Related Learning Objectives**

- + Because online learning may happen in many physical locations outside of a school classroom, continual access to academic and technical support for students is a key to student success.
- + Virtual schools may provide such support at learning centers, through partner agencies like libraries, through an online call center or chat support system, through peer networks, and using other means.

How are online and blended programs succeeding with at-risk students?

## Communication

Among school staff, students and families

- + Regular direct communication to explain program benefits and responsibilities
- + Specific explanation of expectations
- + Increased contact to support struggling students
- + Accountability to ensure communication occurs



## Education Design

- + Synchronous learning activities, web conferences
- + Face-to-face meetings between teacher and student
- + Reduced course load
- + Student assistance program coordinated by counselors and teachers
- + A team member to monitor work and facilitate solutions
- + Creating smaller pieces of assignments- "chunking"
- + Offering flexible setting and time to complete assignments
- + Building computer literacy skills to reduce technical skill barriers

## Supportive team

- + Continuous communication and support from teachers, learning coaches, counselors, tutors, and special education coordinators.
- + Faculty/staff taking a direct role in overseeing student progress and success throughout the program

## Mentoring and coaching

- + iMentors, supervising teacher, and school counselor; in addition to class teachers
- + Collaborative team effort regularly checking on student's progress
- + Site-based tutoring sessions
- + Academic coaches
- + Online extra curricular activities

## Mastery learning

- + Focus on learning rather than performance to foster student identity as a successful learner
- + Students can retry assignments and assessments based on specific feedback until they meet the targeted outcomes
- + Online classes offer flexibility and support expanded learning time

## Individualizing

- ✚ Differentiating with technology and curriculum
- ✚ Using one-to-one and small group direct instruction to remediate key concepts
- ✚ Online reading programs for comprehension and fluency

## What successes have schools seen?

- ✚ Increased class completion from students who were not successful in face-to-face
- ✚ Higher graduation rate
- ✚ Less attrition
- ✚ Closer ties between students and teachers/school

## UF research articles

- Liu, F., & Cavanaugh, C. (in press). Success in Online High School Algebra: Factors influencing student academic performance. *Open Learning* 27.2.
- Liu, F. & Cavanaugh, C. (in press). Online Core Course Success Factors in Virtual School: Factors influencing student academic achievement. *International Journal of E-Learning* 10(4)43-65.
- Liu, F., & Cavanaugh, C. (2011). Success in online high school Biology: factors influencing student academic performance. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 12(1).
- Repetto, J., Cavanaugh, C., Wayer, N., & Liu, F. (2010). Virtual High Schools: Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 11 (2), 91-104.
- Kennedy, K. & Cavanaugh, C. (2010). Development and Support of Online Teachers: The Roles of Mentors in Virtual Schools. *Journal of Technology in the Classroom*, 2(3), 37-42.

## iNACOL reports and books

<http://www.inacol.org/research/bookstore/index.php>

"Promising Practices in Online Learning: Using Online Learning for At-Risk Students and Credit Recovery"

Ferdig, R. & Cavanaugh, C. (Eds.). (2011). *Lessons Learned from State-Led Virtual Schools: Experiences and Recommendations from the Field*.

Ferdig, R., Cavanaugh, C. & Freidhoff, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Lessons learned from blended programs: Experiences and recommendations from the field*.